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SIN AND REPENTANCE

The great difficulty in dealing with any theme in biblical theology is the conflicting interests of theological synthesis and historical analysis. It is misguided and misleading to treat the Bible as a homogeneous block; throughout its long and complicated history we must expect that ideas will evolve and develop. Historical analysis is itself a difficult and delicate subject. But for practical purposes we may follow the accepted critical positions on the development of biblical literature, and divide it into three periods, corresponding roughly with the three strata discernible in the Pentateuch.¹ The first period runs from the beginning to about the time of the monarchy, when J and E were composed. The second is the period of the prophets, whose thought and spirit is expressed in D. The third is the exilic and post-exilic era reflected in P.

We begin, therefore, at the beginning. In fact, if we are to appreciate the origins of strictly biblical thought, we have to begin before the beginning. What idea of sin has man without revelation? We speak of the natural law—the demands of the Creator known from the nature of His creation. But what idea had men at this stage of reasoning, of nature, or creation, or Creator? Certainly they had some idea of God—of divinity, of something other than themselves. And man's attitude in the face of this mysterious other was one of awe, terror, recoil. It was something he had to keep his distance from. Precisely because it was 'other,' it indicated certain limitations on human existence which it was dangerous to overstep; certain spheres of interest were marked out as forbidden territory, and to trespass on that territory was 'sin.'

But even this idea of an 'other' was not clearly and specifically defined. For primitive man lived in a whole world which was to some extent 'other': a strange and frightening place; storms, thunder, lightning—even the more benign phenomena of day and night, ordered seasons and growth of crops—all of this was utterly

¹ cf. Michael M. Winter, 'Reflections on the Sources of the Pentateuch,' *Scripture*, 1960, pp. 78-89

mysterious, beyond his comprehension and control. It made the world in which he lived a fearsome place. And this fear was not clearly distinguished from the other, namely awe of the divinity which lay beyond their sphere. Awe of the divine is not clearly distinguished from panic—terror of 'Pan,' of all things, of the alien natural forces which made up their world. Mythology is an expression of that confusion—the mysterious natural forces were personified and looked on as manifestations of the divine, of the *mysterium tremendum*.

But it was not sufficient to give a theoretical explanation of the world; men had to learn also how to live in it. By a process of trial and error, coupled with the same imagination which produced the mythologies, men worked out empirical rules which enabled them to come to terms with their environment—magic, the first step in the development of the natural sciences. And here again, the rules he thus forged for himself were not clearly distinguished from the rules governing his relationship with the divine. All of them together were things 'not done,' under pain of disturbing the precarious order in which we live; here too, transgression is 'sin,' and the result is or may be death.

For that, at the lowest and in the concrete, is what men were—and are—most deeply concerned with: life—not merely existence, but life, health, prosperity, fertility, harmony between men, harmony with their environment, harmony with whatever it is that controls our existence. This is what men are concerned with; and 'sin' is the name given to anything which violates or endangers this vital quality. In order to ensure life and ward off 'sin,' certain rules are formulated: the confused mass of convention, superstition and taboo which regulate human existence.

This is the pre-biblical concept of sin; and we do not expect revelation to make any sudden revolutionary change in this concept, bringing about a miraculous advance in clarity and precision of thought which the rest of mankind was not to achieve for centuries. We expect to find, and we do in fact find in the Bible itself, something very like what we have been talking about. We find it in the most basic Hebrew word for sin—*ḥata'*; the root meaning of which is to go astray, to miss the mark: to do something which is 'not done' and in consequence to fail to achieve one's objective—just as the failure to utter the correct incantation will invalidate the spell. We find it also in the things which are called sin. Oza touches the Ark of the Covenant to prevent it falling—and he dies; for this belongs to God, and Oza has trespassed on that forbidden territory. Aaron's sons, newly consecrated and unfamiliar with the ritual, offer incense without observing the due forms—and they also die.

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Sin is used to denote actions contrary to God's will where there is no question of conscious responsibility: Abraham deceives Pharaoh about his relationship to Sara; but when the king takes her in good faith, he is punished and has to make amends. The law even lays down regulations for actions which are explicitly said to be performed unwittingly: 'If anyone lets slip an oath in any of those matters in which a man may swear thoughtlessly, then, when he comes to realise it, he is responsible for it: he must then confess the sin, and offer God a sacrifice for the sin he has committed . . .' (cf. Lev. 5:4ff).¹

Even more akin to the attitude of a previous stage are those cases where sin is used of things in which there is no question of morality at all, either subjective or objective: of child-birth, for example, or menstruation. Or even more strangely, to our eyes, of dry-rot in a house—called, by analogy, leprosy: 'The priest will offer sacrifice for the sin of the house . . . and after the rite of expiation has been performed, the house will be pure' (Lev. 14:49-53).

Clearly, in such an indiscriminate collection there is room for many distinctions. Some of these distinctions will be indicated later. But no matter what distinction is made, the language used by the Bible points clearly to a certain attitude of mind: sin refers much more to the action done than to the intention of the doer; it is the mechanical, automatic transgression of a rule, of a standard. Even more truly one could say that sin indicates the state of disorder, of disharmony, a state of impaired vitality; and the fact that this is due to our activity, and even more whether that activity is culpable or not, is of secondary importance.

But that does not mean to say that even in this stage there is no difference at all between the biblical attitude to sin and the pre-biblical. On one vital point there is an immense step-forward. We find it expressed in the Bible's account of the origin of evil. Sin covers every aspect of disorder, physical as well as moral: on this the Bible would have agreed with a pagan contemporary. But since physical disorder is a universal phenomenon, especially in its most crucial form, death, then the origin of it must be sought in some universal ancestor. This follows from the fact of corporate personality: we are all in a state of 'sin,' therefore the father of us all must have put himself into a state of sin. Now, to explain how this came about, the author has before him various models, various theories such as those we have

¹ The law distinguishes between sin-offering and guilt-offering, and it is tempting to interpret this in terms with which we are more familiar, by the distinction between material and formal sin. But more probably the distinction is between offences against God and offences against the community—with the subjective consciousness a secondary element.

outlined above. To a large extent he accepts the data of current thought, but he reinterprets it with wonderful theological penetration. He accepts the idea of God as 'other'; but he realises that God is other precisely because he is not a creature. He is Creator, maker of all that is and lord of all. And if lord, supreme controller and arbiter of its destiny—arbiter of its good and bad, right and wrong. And man's fear in the face of this supreme God, which for the pagan is blind panic, is for the author of Genesis respect for God's supremacy. To trespass—as the first man trespassed—is not merely the objective fact of doing something which happens to displease the god; it is a challenge to that supremacy; it is refusal to recognise the infinite gulf between the Creator and the creature; it is to arrogate to oneself autonomy; it is to rebel—and this now is a new name for sin which enters the biblical vocabulary: *pasha'*, revolt.

Clearly, this is an immense advance, and one that makes a decisive difference between biblical and pre-biblical thought. But we must not over-estimate the influence of this step-forward. Sin is given a very definite religious setting; it is rebellion against the Lord whose will is supreme. But God's supremacy could be shown in the mere fact of a command, without regard for which actions are commanded: the reticence of Genesis on the exact nature of the command given to the first man is remarkable. There is, then, not much critique at this stage of precisely which actions are commanded and are therefore sin. Much of the pre-biblical material which we summed up as convention, superstition and taboo continued to be invoked in Israel. Of course they were not now invoked as superstition. Nor on the other hand were they rationalised (one might so easily have expected the legislation concerning clean and unclean animals, for example, or the laws about leprosy, to be rationalised and presented as social legislation). They are merely incorporated into Israel's religious life, under the rubric: 'Thus says Yahweh. . . .' But the fact that it is Yahweh's will, with all that Israel meant by Yahweh, is the great advance of this first stage of Israelite religion.

All that Israel meant by Yahweh: but it was the prophets who were mainly responsible for exploring the deeper significance of that revelation.

Israel's faith stemmed from the covenant at Sinai. A covenant is an agreement between persons—not an equal agreement, of course, but nevertheless both parties must be equally persons: you cannot have a covenant with a storm or a sun or any of the other forces which the pagans personified as gods. The God of Israel is a person as real as the Israelites themselves, as real as Moses. And the prophets realised that in the covenant and the law which embodied it God had revealed

His personality. He had shown them what manner of God He was. They were not to have an image of God; no image could do other than distort and debase the notion of a transcendent God. But their God was not for that reason vague and impersonal: He was real and close to them; 'no other nation has its god so close to it as our God is to us—in commandment and precept and ceremony' (Deut. 4:7). The law, then, is the expression of God's will; but it is not an arbitrary will. It is the expression of His will because it is the expression of His person.

And what is God? The two words which run through the Bible as most characteristic of God are *hesed* *w^cemeth*: mercy and truth: charity and justice. And because these are the characteristics of God, they are the characteristics demanded of God's people Israel. Those two words are indeed a fair summing up of the whole of the prophetic teaching: their fierce indignation with social injustice, with dishonesty and luxury and wealth won by oppression, the oppression particularly of the poor and helpless. Had not God found Israel poor and oppressed, in nakedness and utter nothingness; and had He not then, out of sheer love and mercy, picked them up and clothed them and given them food and even made them rich? This is what God is; and therefore how great a distortion it is that the people who are to carry His name before the world should show no care for the fatherless, the poor and the widow.

In this way the prophets came to see which actions were sinful, and why they were sinful. But they go a step further, and see also the deeper relationship between a man and his deeds. A covenant is a mutual relationship between persons. God has come to Israel in pure, unmotivated love; and He demands in return our whole selves, with equal love. Reflection on the supremacy of God led the author of Genesis to see that sin was rebellion. But reflection on the covenant gives a deeper meaning to that word rebellion: it is the rebellion of a subject against his king, of a son against a father. God is Father, and Israel is His first-born son: 'Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have brought forth sons and brought them up—and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its master, and the ass its master's stall; but Israel has not known Me' (Is. 1:2-3). Father and son: man and wife even, prophets like Osee preach. The covenant relationship is as close as the bond of marriage, and the same love and affection and care which should be found in marriage, and which characterises God in His relationship with Israel, is demanded by God in return: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord thy God is one God; and you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength' (Deut. 6:4-5).

This was the implication of the covenant. A later prophet¹ sees the same implication in the very transcendence of God. We have seen how Israel interpreted the vague intuition of an 'other' in terms of an Almighty God. Now the Hebrew word for this idea is Holy. The root-meaning is 'cut off': absolutely other, absolutely separate from men and our world. But this does not mean cut off in the sense of remote and uncaring. On the contrary, it means that all creation depends on him for existence, and exists for him. 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts—Heaven and earth are full of his glory.'

This world exists for the glory of God, for His service. And it is man's function to use it in this way—to make it, like the hymn of the seraphim, a hymn of praise to the Creator. This was in particular the function of Israel; that is why God had chosen them, to be a kingly priesthood and a holy nation: a nation dedicated to the service of God, and through whom the world would be dedicated to Him. To fail in this function—to use creation in a way which excluded this purpose, to use it for man's own benefit without regard to the transcendent rights of the Creator—was blasphemy against the holy God. And that was what made certain acts sinful, and this gave a criterion by which we could know their sinfulness.

But if dedication to the holy God means showing His dominion over creation, that dominion must extend first of all to us, to men called to His service. Total service: not merely, then, the service of our hands, but of our hearts also; not merely deeds, but deeds which express our will. Our God is a jealous God: and that means not only that He will not give His glory to another—it means also that He will not allow our love to go to another; He will not accept anything less than heartfelt service.

And it is in the light of such penetrating and exalted teaching that the prophets see sin. By reflection on the covenant they see that sin is rebellion against an Almighty God, the rebellion of a son against a loving Father, the unfaithfulness of a spouse to her beloved; it is failure to reflect in our own lives the God who has revealed Himself to us. And by analysis of the concept of 'otherness,' they see that sin is blasphemy against God's supreme and total rights. This is already a far cry from the idea of sin as simple transgression. The prophets have now been able to see exactly why certain things are wrong, and therefore to launch a pungent attack against all superstitions by showing more precisely *which* actions are wrong. But in

¹ The prophet referred to is Deutero-Isaiah; this might then seem to disturb the historical development indicated at the beginning of this article. But in the first place it is pointed out below that this historical scheme is not to be taken in too rigid a sense; and in the second place, although this teaching is seen most characteristically in Deutero-Isaiah, it is not altogether absent from the pre-exilic prophets; cf. Is. 6:3, quoted below.

addition they have even been able to show in what spirit these acts should be performed : the service of the heart, the giving of love for love. Jeremias even envisages the time when this alone shall count ; when there shall be a new covenant in which the law will not be written on stone, but in the hearts of the people (Jer. 31:31).

This is noble teaching indeed ; and it would be most satisfying if we could end the Old Testament on that exalted note. But after the prophets comes that rather indeterminate body of literature called the Didactic books, and, in somewhat the same spirit, the Priestly author who put the finishing touches to the Pentateuch.

This seems to be the moment to take notice of an obvious objection. When we were speaking of the primitive form of biblical religion, that in which relics of the pre-biblical stage were most evident, it was to the book of Leviticus that we most naturally turned. It is here that we find all that strange legislation that attaches the word 'sin' to such things as child-birth, illness and dry-rot. And yet this book of Leviticus is normally attributed to the Priestly author, who belongs to this third and latest stage of biblical development.

It is very tempting to dismiss this objection with the facile jibe that legalism is always an anachronism from the point of view of genuine morality : that to make a code of laws to regulate a personal relationship of love is bound to be a return to that mechanical, quasi-superstitious attitude which we met in peoples who are unclear on the real nature of God and on man's relationship to him. This is a temptation all the greater because there is so much truth in it, as we find from a consideration of the religion of the Pharisees.

But it is too facile to be the whole truth. In the Bible above all, we cannot admit that the ingenuity or limitation of human minds is the complete explanation of the development that takes place. It is nearer to the truth to look at it like this. We have been talking about stages of development ; but we must not think of these stages as simple, clear-cut divisions, with one stage marking a complete break from the preceding. In religion above all, an immense value is attached to traditional forms and ideas ; so that the characteristics of one stage persist into the following, even if it is necessary to give them a new interpretation if they are to survive. An obvious and simple example is the law of the Sabbath : by comparison with other civilisations, it seems clear that a special regard for the seventh day is connected with the idea of *dies fasti et nefasti*—days on which it was lucky or unlucky to do certain things, depending on the position of the moon : a perfect example of primitive superstition. Israel inherited this custom, but adapted it to her theology : first, through the idea of God's supremacy—all time belongs to God and one day is

chosen to represent this ; then the prophetic view given in Deuteronomy adds a humanitarian motive—God led Israel out of bondage into rest, and therefore on this day all should have opportunity to rest ; and then the Priestly author returns rather to the earlier point of view, specifying particularly the duty of refraining from work, just as God ceased work on the seventh day.

And in the same way, practices and observances which had remained current in Israel from the earliest days were reinterpreted in the exilic and post-exilic periods. This is not the place to go into the details of this reinterpretation ; but in general we can say that the keeping of the law of God was made the test of true religion. The prophets had preached personal devotion to God ; but this personal devotion is a meaningless phrase or empty emotionalism if it is not expressed in devotion to God's law. Of course the prophets too had seen this ; indeed they had taught that this is what the law was—the expression of God's personality. But now the emphasis is reversed. The law now is made the touch-stone of religion ; this is how in practice we distinguish between good and evil : ' Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord, who has not walked with sinners . . . ' The sinner is he who has not kept the law of God ; to keep the law is to put oneself on God's side. (That is the point of the self-righteous-sounding claims in some of the Psalms : ' Lord, if I have done that, if I have stained my hands with fraud or done evil to my benefactor, then rightly let me be crushed ' : ' Test and search me, Lord : I have not sat with the wicked, I have hated evil-doers, I have washed my hands with the innocent. ' They are not as smug as they sound : they are rather a desperate assertion of loyalty ; it is taking sides—and the side that the psalmist chooses is faithfulness to the standard of God as expressed in the law.) It is above all the contrary to that practical atheism which is involved in ignoring God's law : ' The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, there is not one that does good ' (Ps. 13:1). It is an attitude we should recognise ; it is the attitude of the ordinary Catholic, for whom religion is primarily a matter of keeping the commandments. We ' practise our faith, ' because our faith is something which has practical implications.

Religion is to be practised. It is a rule of life. In the concrete, it is the law that marks out this rule—this way, which is God's own way : *Beati immaculati in via*, God's own way, that is, His practical directions on how to reach Him. It is therefore the highest wisdom — ' the law of God is true, giving wisdom to little ones, enlightening the eyes and giving guidance to the feet. ' Typically, then, the old term for sin is now reinterpreted : sin is *ḥaṭa'*, going astray—but not now in the sense of invalidating the ritual, but in the very concrete

sense of straying from the path marked out by God. And at the same time a new word for sin now becomes popular : it is *nabal*, folly.¹

When we come to the New Testament, we find, as we would expect, that the same teaching is maintained, though it is given a wonderfully supernatural twist. We find, for example, that our Lord's practical criterion of morality is not different from that of the Priestly author or the scribes : 'If you love me, keep my commandments' : 'He who claims to love God and does not keep His commands, is a liar.' Our Lord has come to fulfil the law, not to destroy it ; our justice must abound more than that of the scribes and the Pharisees. But in the New Testament even more clearly than in the Old, it is taught that it is not the act which justifies or condemns, so much as the intention : 'It is not that which enters into a man which defiles a man, but that which comes out of a man ; for out of the heart proceed lies, murders, adulteries.'

The intention—the motive power behind the actions : above all and essentially, then, love of God. This is the centre of morality, and in the light of this, the greatest of the commandments, all other commands fade into the background : to love God and to love one's neighbour is to have kept all the law.

We return, then, to the ideal of the prophets, which we have already seen as a high-point in religious development. Our Lord himself points out that his doctrine of the primacy of charity is such an Old Testament ideal : 'What read you in the law ?' But the New Testament is not a mere reaffirmation of the Old. No ; it is precisely at this point that there takes place that profound deepening of the thought which gives its morality its specific character. At the very beginning of our consideration of sin, we pointed out that it should be viewed in relation to life : sin is anything which impairs or endangers this most basic quality. Even in the Old Testament there was something sacred about this quality of life—it was breathed into man from the breath of God Himself. But what the Old Testament only dared hint at in impossible longings, is now in the New boldly asserted to have come true : 'I have come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly' : 'If any man believes in me, he

¹ Clearly, there can be no question of attempting a complete theology of sin in one essay ; and many valid and even important aspects have been omitted in favour of one clear line of thought. This is particularly true of the post-exilic period, in which many valuable developments took place ; the increasing spiritualisation of sin, for example ; the consequent suggestion of a distinction between the physical and moral elements which were up till then indiscriminately classed as 'sin' ; which in turn opens the way for the theology of Redemption as it will be sketched in a later section ; important also is the beginning of a doctrine of Original Sin through the doctrine of man's *yeşer*, his innate feebleness through which he is 'inclined to evil from his earliest youth.'

shall have eternal life': 'I in them, and they in me—that they may be one, as thou, Father, and I': 'I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.' . . . A whole stream of texts testifies to the realisation that the Christian is living the life of God through Christ. But what is God? God is love. To share the life of God, therefore, means to share this love. God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God. God is love, and the Christian life is sharing that nature and that love. For the prophets, whole-hearted service was demanded because without it there was not total service—that which was most essential to man, his whole personality, was not involved. But the Christian demands whole-hearted service simply because it is the expression of the life that is in him. That is why St John can say, in a text quoted above, that the man who claims to love God but does not keep the commandments is a liar. To sin is to deny the life that we have been given, the divine life. To sin is to return to that death from which Christ came to deliver us.

Sin, for the Old Testament, was anything which impaired the quality of life. That is why it included such things as sickness and death under the term sin. We seem to have quietly let this aspect of 'sin' drop out of sight. But in the Bible it never drops out of sight; even in the New Testament, in Matthew in particular, the attitude to our Lord's miracles makes it quite clear that our Lord is founding the kingdom of heaven just as much in curing leprosy as in forgiving sins. But although this theology of sin still persists, on this point too a new twist is given which lets it be seen finally, and surprisingly, as a theology of repentance. One may reconstruct the line of thought in this way.

When sin was looked on as simply transgression, the most obvious way of avoiding the harmful consequences of this transgression was sacrifice—sacrifice looked on almost as a bribe offered to God, or at the very least as a 'sweetener,' or else as a recompense for the injustice of trespassing on His interests. Against this view of sacrifice the prophets reacted strongly, and stressed the internal attitude that sacrifice should express: 'What do I care about your countless sacrifices? I am sated, I am nauseated; but wash your hands, take away your evil from my sight, and then come before me. . . . Woe to those who offer sacrifice with injustice. . . . I will have charity and not sacrifice.'

At another stage, there was a clearer realisation that the impaired life that 'sin' involved was the loss of a quality which came from God. Therefore by certain symbolic acts they tried to return to union with God—by washing in water, for example: water very fittingly symbolised the living God, and by immersing himself in water a man

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could be symbolically united once more with God, the source of all life.

But no matter what symbolic expression was chosen, the basic attitude is summed up in the word 'return.' Sin is going astray, a step in the wrong direction; it is rebellion against God; it is a breach of personal union with God. The first thing necessary is to correct that false step, to turn away from one's sins, to turn back to God. This is true in the New Testament just as much as in the Old; the first words of the gospel are 'Repent'—*metanoeite*, change your minds.

But obviously, this change, this repentance, will involve confession: 'Repent and confess your sins,' is the subject of the first Christian sermon by St Peter. It will involve admitting that we were wrong: you cannot turn back without admitting that you were going in the wrong direction. And if we admit that we were wrong, we must also admit that we deserved punishment: 'All that thou hast done to us, O Lord,' Daniel prays in the captivity after the destruction of Jerusalem, 'Thou hast done justly: because we had sinned and gone astray from thee' (Dan. 3:28ff.). Therefore, an important element in repentance is not merely the admission that we were wrong and a change of direction; it is also the acceptance of suffering which our sins have deserved: we have not only to repent, but 'to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.'

Repentance involves penance. Can penance achieve forgiveness? The Old Testament gropes towards this truth: if sacrifice can bring forgiveness, should not suffering also: 'A sacrifice to God is a contrite heart.' And the same idea, no doubt as a result of the suffering of the Exile, is even more vividly expressed by Deutero-Isaiah: 'It was our sufferings that he bore, he was crushed for our sins. And it was by his wounds that we were healed.'

And so the theology of Redemption is evolved—that through the sufferings our sins deserved, our Lord expresses and effects man's return to God: atonement, reunion with God. Death is indeed conquered. Its power has been completely reversed. It was sin's most powerful partner and ally; like sin, it was the antithesis of life. But our Lord has made it the means by which sin is destroyed and the fullness of life achieved.

And from that doctrine of Redemption, a doctrine of repentance too emerges in a new light. It is true that our Lord died once and for all; and it is true also that his death and resurrection are symbolically and sacramentally effected in us by Baptism, equally once and for all. But nevertheless the Christian living with the life of Christ must be continually dying to sin; we live a dying life; we die daily. Our whole Christian life is a continual turning away from sin—a continual

repentance ; and we do it in the same way as our Lord did it. What in Christ is Redemption, in the Christian is repentance. Our Lord made suffering and death into a means of Redemption ; we also take them, and make them an expression of repentance. Our Lord's Redemption was, in the sense that we have seen, an expression of repentance ; our Christian life is a living out of the Redemption, which is a living out of repentance. ' If we are dead with Christ, then we believe that we shall also live with him. . . . His death was a death to sin once and for all, and life to God. You also look on yourselves as dead to sin, and living to God in Christ Jesus ' (Rom. 6:8-11).

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Ushaw

THE PROPHETICAL MEANING OF CELIBACY—II

II *Propter Regnum Caelorum* : Positive aspect

A previous article¹ has shown that, according to the Bible, and according to Jeremias and St Paul especially, celibate life is a prophecy in action, a foreboding of the end, a public proclamation of the fleeting character of this world.

It goes without saying that this is only one aspect of the mystery. There is another one. The last days are not only days of doom : they are also days of resurrection. Jeremias was not only the prophet of the fall of Jerusalem : he was also the prophet of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-5). Similarly for St Paul the last days are only secondarily days of woe : primarily, they are the days of the Parousia when Christ will come and hand over to the Father the world revived by the Spirit (1 Cor. 15). The Apocalypse ends its enumeration of the eschatological calamities by the resplendent description of the heavenly Jerusalem where everything is made new (Apoc. 21). Christ's death on Calvary was only the beginning of his Exaltation (Jn. 3:14-15 ; 12:32-3). The full prophetic meaning of virginity is to be understood in reference to the whole mystery of death and life contained in Christ. Celibacy is not only an enacted prophecy of the imminent doom : it announces also and anticipates the life to come, the life of the new world in the Spirit.

Jeremias, who had announced the New Covenant, might have

¹ *Scripture*, 1960, pp. 97-105

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understood that virginity would be the typical state in that new life which was no longer to be granted by the power of the flesh but by the Spirit. But in fact he does not seem to have realised these implications of his prophetic teaching. Or if he did, he had no occasion to express it. We have to come to the Gospels to find this doctrine expounded.

Jesus lived a celibate life. We cannot say that his case was unique. By the beginnings of the Christian era, the ideal of virginity seems to have been cultivated at least in some restricted circles of Judaism. We have seen the rather mysterious case of the Essenes. John the Baptist also must have observed celibacy. This movement might explain the purpose of virginity expressed by Mary in Lk 1:34.¹ Jesus assumed that ideal and by his very life fulfilled the latent aspirations it contained.

Yet there is very little in the Gospels about virginity. This is not surprising. The Gospels are only factual summaries. There is little in them for introspection and self-analysis. They have little to say about Jesus' personal life. They do not tell us how he felt when praying, when working miracles, when undergoing the trials of his Passion. It is no wonder therefore that they should be almost completely silent concerning Jesus' celibacy. This silence gives more value to the one statement of the Gospels in which Christ explained how he understood his virginity.

It was on an occasion in which he had emphasised once more the law of indissolubility of matrimony. The disciples could hardly understand the intransigence of the Master. As usual Jesus tried to bring light to the discussion by taking it to a higher level. The heart of the matter is not the convenience of men but the requirements of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God does make exacting demands upon its members. See the case of those to whom it has been given to realise fully the implications of the coming of the Kingdom: they can be compared to eunuchs!

There are eunuchs who were born so from their mother's womb
and there are eunuchs who were made so by men
and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so in view of the
Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 19:12)

Though this pericope appears in Matthew only, there is no reason to deny its authenticity. In his book on the Synoptic Gospels, L. Vaganay insists several times that Mt. 19:10-12, along with several other passages, though appearing in one Gospel only, belongs to the oldest layer of the Gospel formation, and to the most ancient tradition

¹ cf. R. Laurentin, *Luc I-II*, Paris 1957, pp. 176-88

common to the three Synoptic Gospels.¹ If the text figures in Matthew only, it is not because it was added afterwards to the final edition of Matthew: it is not a case of addition by Matthew but of omission by Mark and Luke. The pericope on the eunuchs has an archaic ring that would have been shocking to Gentile ears. It is the kind of coarse Semitic paradox, frequent in the Bible, quite appealing to the rough peasants of Palestine accustomed to the loud and often brutal eloquence of the prophets. It could hardly be exported to Greece or even to Asia Minor, Syria or Egypt. It is not surprising that Mark and Luke preferred to drop it. Yet 'its very paradoxical aspect guarantees its authenticity.'² Moreover, the parallel text of Mark seems to leave traces of the amputation. In Mk. 10:10, after the discussion with the Pharisees on matrimony, Jesus returns home together with his disciples. There is a change of place and of audience: Jesus is now in the intimate circle of his disciples. Usually when he retires together with them, it is to teach a deeper doctrine (Mk. 4:10, 34; 7:17; 9:30; 10:32). One would expect here, 'at home,' further explanations on the views he has just exposed. Yet, according to Mk. 10:10-12, Jesus merely repeats the elementary explanations which, according to Mt. 19:9, 5:32 and Lk. 16:18, he would as well give to the crowds. Does not this mean that in the source Mark used, there was 'at home' some other deeper teaching imparted to the disciples? But what other teaching was there except the logion on the eunuchs recorded by Matthew? Mark removed that saying, but the operation has left a scar in the text.

If the pericope does belong to the origins of the Gospel composition, there is no reason to doubt that it was really an utterance of Jesus and this decides the question of its exact bearing.

In the concrete context of Jesus' celibate life, it is easy to find out to whom the third category of eunuchs refers. When the disciples heard that saying, they could but think of Jesus himself and possibly also of John the Baptist. It is clear that Jesus here speaks of his own case and explains it. He does not advocate self-mutilation: he sets up his own example. He observed virginity and he did it consciously 'in view of God's Kingdom.' John the Baptist had done it before him; others would follow. Thus Jesus presents himself as the leader in a line of men who, thinking of God's Kingdom, will live like eunuchs, giving up the use of their sexual powers.³

¹ L. Vaganay, *Le Problème Synoptique*, Paris-Tournai 1954, pp. 167, 211, 216, etc.

² *op. cit.*, p. 167

³ This evidently settles the problem, discussed from the time of Origen onwards, of whether the saying should be understood in a realistic or in a symbolic sense. In Kittel's *TWNT* (I, p. 590), Schmidt favours the realistic interpretation: the saying would allude to people who actually castrated themselves; it would invite the disciples

But what is exactly the relation between virginity and God's Kingdom? Why should one remain a celibate *propter regnum caelorum*? What is the precise value of that *propter* (*dia* in Greek)? In biblical Greek, *dia* with the accusative denotes causality or finality (out of, for the sake of, in view of). It is obvious that, in this context, the meaning must be of finality. But this is still very vague, too vague to base on it an explanation of virginity. We cannot build a theology on the strength of a preposition.

If the preposition is vague, the phrase 'Kingdom of Heaven,' on the contrary, is clear enough. The Kingdom of Heaven—or the Kingdom of God, since both phrases have the same significance¹—appears as a key concept of the Synoptic Gospels. It stands at the centre of Jesus' preaching. If not exactly in Judaism, at least in Jesus' mouth, it is 'a comprehensive term for the blessings of salvation,'² having practically the same meaning as 'the age to come' or 'the life of the age to come.'³ It is essentially an eschatological entity. What the Jews had longed for, the prophets had promised and the Apocalyptic writers had described, the new life coming from above, the new world, the new Covenant imparted by God, the new Israel, the gift of the Spirit, Resurrection and Re-creation: it is all that which is contained in God's Kingdom.

But—and this is the novelty of Jesus' teaching—with his coming, the eschatological world, the world to come has become present, though it remains unfulfilled. With the coming of Jesus the Kingdom of God offers the paradoxical character of being at the same time future

¹ 'The Heaven' is a term used by the Jews as a substitute for God to avoid pronouncing the divine name.

² G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, Edinburgh 1902, p. 135. Dalman shows that Jesus somewhat altered the meaning of the phrase by giving it a specifically eschatological value in connection with Dan. 7:27. So, though in Judaism the phrase should be translated 'the kingship of God,' it becomes, in Jesus' teachings, synonymous with eschatological salvation.

³ Hence the equivalence with the Johannine theme of 'eternal life.'

not to imitate them but, at least, to reflect on their earnestness. Origen himself is a proof that there were such cases in the early Church. But was it so during Jesus' own life-time? It is rather doubtful and still more doubtful that Jesus would have set as an example this hypothetical aberrant behaviour. In the same *TWNT* of Kittel (II, p. 765), J. Schneider maintains the traditional interpretation.

The problem could be viewed also from the angle of Form Criticism. What are the concrete circumstances in the life of the early Church which led to a reminiscence of these words of the Master? What is the concrete problem to which they were given as an answer? It was most evidently the problem of the virgins, an acute problem as we know from 1 Cor. 7, and possibly also, together with it, the problem of the widows 'who are truly widows' (1 Tim. 5:3; cf. 1 Cor. 7:8). According to J. Dupont, *Mariage et Divorce dans l'Evangile*, Bruges 1959, the saying would refer to the case of husbands separated from their wives. This is a rather far-fetched *Sitz im Leben*; moreover it overlooks completely the reference to Jesus' own example.

and present. Jesus assures us that it is already present among us (Mt. 12:28 ; cf. Lk. 12:21) but he also invites us to pray for its coming (Mt. 6:10). Exegetes have tried to rationalise this mystery by reducing Jesus' preaching to one or the other aspect. The 'consequent eschatology' of A. Schweitzer retained only the future aspect: the life of Jesus was mere expectation of an imminent advent of the Kingdom, expectation which was deceived by the event. On the contrary, the 'realised eschatology' of C. H. Dodd retains only the present element: with Jesus, the Kingdom is present and there is nothing to expect from the future; eschatological elements should be dismissed as mere apocalyptic phraseology. Both views are only partial. Kümmel¹ and Cullmann,² among others, have shown that the integral teaching of Christ combines both aspects. In Jesus the powers of the coming aeon are already active and the future Kingdom of God is already at work in the present. The Spirit is given. Yet He works only like a seed: present in Jesus and in those who will follow him, He has still to extend His influence to the whole world till His life-giving activity covers and transforms the whole creation. Such is the meaning of the 'parables of the Kingdom' (Mk. 4 and parallels). We are still waiting for the end: the period we live in is at the same time 'Promise and Fulfilment.'

This appears especially in the 'signs' of the Kingdom. According to the biblical conception, a 'sign' is not a pure symbol, faint image of a distant reality. It is the reality itself in its initial manifestation. In the biblical sign the coming reality is already contained, yet still hidden.³ Kümmel has shown how in that sense Jesus' victory over the devils and his miracles are signs of that kind.⁴ They show already 'the coming consummation of salvation breaking in on the present.'⁵ Cullmann has added to those signs the main ecclesiastical functions: the missionary preaching of the Gospel,⁶ the cult and the sacraments for, in them also, in the Spirit, and 'through the merits of Christ, everything is fulfilled which was accomplished in the past history of salvation and which will be achieved in the future.'⁷

In the light of Mt. 19:12 we can add virginity to those signs. Like the miracles and the sacraments virginity is a 'sign of the Kingdom,' an anticipated realisation of the final transformation, the glory of the world to come breaking in on the present condition. Such is the meaning of *propter regnum caelorum*. Jesus and many of those who

¹ *Promise and Fulfilment*, London 1957

² *Christ et le Temps*, Neuchâtel-Paris 1947

³ cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel, its Life and Culture*, 1926, I, pp. 168ff.

⁴ *op. cit.*, pp. 105-21

⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 121

⁶ *Christ et le Temps*, pp. 111-17

⁷ O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, London 1953, p. 35

follow him refrain from sexual activity 'in view of the Kingdom,' that is, to live already now the life of the world to come. Eschatological life has begun to stir in them and that life will be, and can already be now, a life which has gone beyond the necessity and the urge of procreation. As with their preaching and miracles, Jesus and his disciples by their celibacy proclaim the advent of the Kingdom. They exemplify already in this world the future condition of men in the next aeon.

As Jesus explained to the Sadducees (Mt. 22:30 par.), in the world of Resurrection, 'one shall neither marry nor be married, one will be like the angels in heaven.' This does not mean that man in the Kingdom of God will be asexual, losing his human nature to become a pure spirit in the philosophical sense of the term. Such a philosophical consideration would be quite alien to the biblical mentality. Man was not made as a pure spirit neither in this world nor in the other, and consequently celibacy cannot consist in trying to ape the angels. St Luke explains the exact meaning of this analogy between the risen man and the angels in his rendering of the logion. 'They shall neither marry nor be married for they are no more liable to die: for they are equal to the angels and they are sons of God, being sons of Resurrection' (Lk. 20:35-6). The point of resemblance with the angels is not their spiritual nature but their immortality. It is on account of his immortality that the risen man need no longer procreate. Life of Resurrection is no more a life 'in the flesh,' in a body doomed to death. It is a life in God, a life of son of God, life 'in the Spirit,' in a body transformed by the divine Glory. Hence the functions of the flesh become useless; procreation loses its meaning which was to make up for the ravages of death.

The celibate shows by his condition that such life has already started. His celibacy testifies to what O. Cullmann has called 'the proleptic deliverance of the body.'¹ It proclaims that, in Christ, despite the appearances, man escapes the clutches of death and lives in the Spirit.

A passage of the Apocalypse echoes that teaching. Apoc. 14:1-5 describes the glory of the Lamb in the heavenly Sion. There his throne is surrounded by a hundred and forty-four thousand men, all those who 'were redeemed from the earth.' They represent the

¹ O. Cullmann, *The Early Church*, London 1956, pp. 165-76. In his article Cullmann does not extend his conclusions to the question of celibacy. He shows only that marriage has a special theological value since it 'corresponds to the relation between Christ and his Church' (p. 173; cf. Eph. 5:29). This view is quite true but should be completed by an awareness that the love between Christ and the Church is of an eschatological—hence virginal—type. The Spouse is a Virgin (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). Similarly, even conjugal love will have eventually to turn into the eschatological virginal *agape* of which celibacy is a prophetic type.

perfect number of all those who, saved by the Lamb, will constitute his retinue in the world to come, namely all the elect. Their main characteristic consists in that 'they are virgins' (v. 4). Virginité must be understood metaphorically: it means primarily fidelity to God by opposition to idolatry, often described in Scripture as a 'prostitution.' Yet considering the realistic value of Hebrew symbolism, the concrete sense of virginité should not be altogether dismissed: 'they have not defiled themselves with women' (v. 4).¹ This does not mean that the author would make of virginité a necessary condition for entering the Kingdom. This passage must be understood in parallelism with ch. 7, which also describes a hundred and forty-four thousand men leading an innumerable multitude which surrounds the throne of the Lamb. Whilst in ch. 14 they are all virgins, in ch. 7 they are all martyrs. This should not be understood as meaning only martyrdom can lead to salvation. But it does mean that one has no access to the Kingdom unless 'he washes his robe and makes himself white in the blood of the Lamb' (Apoc. 7:14). The martyr is the typical Christian for he shares the most closely in the Cross of his Master. One cannot be a Christian unless he shares in some way in the fate of the martyrs, in the Cross of Christ. The same interpretation can be extended to the fourteenth chapter. 'As martyrdom, virginité is eminently representative of Christian life. Even as one cannot be saved without participating in the dignity of martyrdom, one cannot be saved without participating in the dignity of virginité. Virginité is a heavenly perfection, an anticipation, for those who are called to it, of what will be the final destiny of all in the Kingdom of Heaven.'² In the world to come all are virgins. Even those who are married must keep their eyes on that ideal and know that their love has to turn into virginal charity. Those who remain celibate 'in view of the Kingdom of Heaven' belong to the virginal retinue of their heavenly King the Lamb. As St Gregory of Nyssa says: 'Virginal life is an image of the happiness that will obtain in the world to come; for it contains in itself many signs of the good things which in hope are laid before us. . . . For when one brings in himself the life according to the flesh to an end, as far as it depends on him, he can expect "the blessed hope and the coming of the great God," curtailing the interval of the intervening generations between himself and God's advent. Then he can enjoy in the present life the choicest of the good things afforded by the Resurrection.'³

¹ cf. L. Cerfaux-J. Cambier, *L'Apocalypse de St Jean lue aux Chrétiens*, Paris 1955, pp. 124ff. ² op. cit., p. 125

³ *De Virginitate*, P.G. 46, 381f. The theme of celibacy as heavenly life or angelic life is frequent in Patristic literature. cf. L. Bouyer, *The Meaning of Monastic Life*, London 1955, pp. 23-40.

Thus the mystery of virginity, as any mystery of Christian life, has a double aspect. It has a negative aspect: it represents the death of Christ and, through it, looks towards the complement of that death, the end of all, the apocalyptic consummation. It has also a positive aspect: it shows forth the new life in the Spirit, initiated by the Resurrection of Christ, to be fulfilled at the Parousia.

This doctrine is best embodied in the Lukan account of the Virgin birth of Christ. Mary is a Virgin (Lk. 1:34) and, in her virginity, through the operation of the Spirit, she gave birth to Christ, the 'first born' of the new world. Thus, in her virginal fecundity, she anticipated and even originated the recreation of the world through the Spirit.

In that account it must be first noticed that Luke—and Mary—following the Hebrew mentality, do not extol virginity for its own sake. In the *Magnificat* Mary describes her condition of virgin as a condition of *humilitas*, that is a low condition (Lk. 1:48). This was exactly the term used by Anna in 1 Sam. 1:11 to qualify her disgrace of having no child. In fact the whole narrative of the virgin birth of Christ in Luke is built in parallelism with the narratives of the Old Testament describing how sterile women were made miraculously fecund by God.¹ To some extent Luke puts Mary's virginity on a par with the sterility of those women. By remaining a virgin, Mary shares in the wretchedness of Jephthe's daughter, in the abjection of the poor women who had no child (Gen. 16:4; 1 Sam. 1:1-16; Lk. 1:25). She accepted willingly the utter poverty and the opprobrium of those who had no hope of reaching, in motherhood, their human plenitude and who consequently were rejected by the world as useless.

But in the New Kingdom by God's transforming power, there is a reversal of the human values. The lowly are exalted (Lk. 1:52), the poor possess the earth (Lk. 6:20), those who weep laugh (Lk. 6:21), the sterile and the virgins are visited by the power of the Spirit and become receptacles of the divine life. These are simply various aspects of the revolution of the Cross turning infamy into glory, death unto life. The glorious fecundity of Mary's humble virginity contains already the mystery of the Cross. The hopelessness of her virginity points to the hopelessness of the Cross: it proclaims that the world is doomed and that no salvation is to be expected from the flesh. But the fecundity of that virginity presages the triumph of the Cross: by the power of the Holy Ghost life will spring from death as it had sprung from the closed womb of a virgin. Thus Mary's virginity

¹ cf. S. Lyonnet, 'Le Récit de l'Annonciation,' in *L'Ami du Clergé*, LXVI (1956), pp. 37-8, and J. P. Audet, 'L'Annonce à Marie,' in *Revue Biblique*, LXXX (1956), pp. 346-74

announces the disappearance of the world of flesh and the rise of a new world of the Spirit. Jeremias's celibacy had prophesied the first part of the mystery. To Mary it was given to see the fulfilment and to prophesy, in her life, both aspects of the imminent consummation.

Mary's virginity was prophetic: it turned towards the Cross and anticipated the end; it inaugurated the new world where the flesh has no power, for that world knows no other fecundity than the fecundity of the Spirit. The charism of virginity in the Church continues and completes that prophetic function. Like Mary and Jesus, the Christian celibate renounces any worldly hope, for he knows that the world has no hope to propose. But, in his loneliness, he announces and through faith already enjoys the eschatological visitation of the Spirit.

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ESSENISM AND CHRISTIANITY—II¹

Comparison of Essene Theology with the Message of Jesus

How does the thought of Jesus in the Gospel compare with such grandeur, a grandeur none the less limited by its paradoxes and its narrowmindedness? Let us attempt a comparison of the two. For our Lord, it is not a question of preserving the light already existing in the world and leading it back to God, a kind of centripetal movement, as it were. That is the view of the Essene: to lead the light to the light is how he conceives his role, a choosing out of what is pure in this world and leading it all back to its origin, to God Himself. But this is by no means the idea that Jesus has. He has quite a different perspective. For him the divine light itself comes into this world to lighten the darkness. It actually enters into the world—the light, which is the Word, is made flesh and itself penetrates our darkness. That is the new element. It is a sort of new conquest by the light, which is God Himself, and victory over the darkness which is on all sides.

Viewed in this way infidelity is not some kind of created reality, obscure and unchangeable, standing in contrast to fidelity. It is not that at all. It is merely the refusal that a heart, always free, can make

¹ cf. *Scripture*, 1960, pp. 119–26

to fidelity. Infidelity has no other existence than in the liberty of man. It is not some kind of destiny to damnation that God has given to some and indeed the majority of mankind. The possibility of infidelity is simply the price God has to pay for giving man freedom—and freedom itself is a consequence of love. Hence for Jesus there is a kind of integration of everything in love, something an Essene would never have imagined. In other words, for Jesus the fundamental point is that God is love, whereas for the Essene that notion is not at all central. For him God is the incorruptible light, and the concept of love is much less basic.

If, therefore, we establish as the basis of everything the fact that God loves and man is essentially someone whom God loves, then it will follow that the response to this love which God expects cannot be something obligatory or forced. When one loves someone, one does not force their love in return; one expects their love but does not force it. It is quite clear that there would be no question of love if one could create some sort of immediate reflex in the other, due to a sovereign mastery over his will. That would not be the response expected by love. A love that was not free would not be love at all. It is for this precise reason that it has been stressed above that the liberty of man is an immediate consequence of the fact that he is loved personally by God. Infidelity therefore is a possibility for whomsoever is free; it is the possibility of saying 'no,' which exists side by side with the possibility of saying 'yes,' the possibility of refusing to love which goes hand in hand with the possibility of complete submission to the love offered.

God therefore is calling the whole of humanity to salvation and to share in His love, even though a certain number turn a deaf ear to this call. In other words the whole world is given the invitation to salvation, but in fact certain men will not achieve this salvation due to their refusing the invitation. This is the only limit to predestination. Hence, in the eyes of Jesus, there is room in the heart of every man for a genuine spiritual drama which is not determined beforehand. The 'yes' and the 'no' are possibilities for everyone and they remain possible as long as a man lives. A ready-made reprobation does not exist. Clearly the consequences of this are enormous. We can never say of anyone that he is a reprobate, or that he is predestined, and most especially that can never be said of oneself. In that lies all the difference between Jesus and those who came to hear him. When someone like Simon the Pharisee said: 'This woman, if he only knew to what class she belonged, he certainly would not let her approach him.' For Simon, the very fact of being a prostitute betrayed this woman as one of the reprobate. For Jesus, on the

contrary, her tears and the very fact that she comes to him is the sign that already she is no longer what Simon thinks her to be.

The tragedy of the Essene consciousness of personal predestination is that it inevitably leads to the foolish exaltation of a group of perfect men, whom it thus perverts through their self-love, while at the same time it singles out a brood of sinners whom it expels into the darkness for all time. For Jesus, however, what is important is not to be conscious of predestination but to be poor in spirit. It is there that we approach the crux of the distinction between Christianity and Essenism. It is not a matter of crying to the Lord, 'Thank you, my Lord, for having made me of another species to that man there at the back of the temple.' That is the attitude of the Essene who believes that the species are already determined. In Christianity the important thing is to say, 'Lord, you have not made me of another species to the rest, but I do recognise my misery and I realise that you alone can change it; hence as a beggar, I am here to implore you to change it.' There is the truly predestined. He is the man who is fully conscious of his misery because he has a presentiment of what God offers him; he has a presentiment of what the love of God is and so he calls out to this love. Moreover he does not call out on his own behalf alone but he cries on behalf of all the others, since he knows that the burning desire of God is not merely to save him, but all those who still refuse His love because they know nothing about it. He cries on their behalf, therefore, and on behalf of all, since the love of God wishes to save all.

Thus, for the Christian there is no such thing as absolute reprobation. There is only unbounded love, and it is that which makes all the difference. It means that there is the liberty of all, face to face with this love, and there is the poverty of all, faced with it, and there is prayer on behalf of all for this love. That is the corner-stone of Christianity. It is not the separation of what is already pure from what is impure, an isolation in order to ascend to God. The call of love is to all, inviting each and every one at the same time.

The final perspective of the Essene is one of uniting himself to the other spirits of light, that is to those already in a state of purity before the face of God. It is his aim to enter into their ranks. For the Christian on the other hand, his concern is not so much with the angels but with his own present situation in this world. Admittedly he sees the dichotomy between the kingdom of fidelity and the domain of infidelity, and to that extent his diagnosis is not unlike that of the Essene. However the difference lies in the fact that the Christian sees himself as a part of this world. For him it is a matter of becoming incandescent with the light which is none other than the love of God

Himself, and which can transform each and every one. In that way the darkness will become light—and surely that is quite a different conception to that of the Essene. It is a penetration, and an irradiation through the heart of everyone it penetrates, and its rays go out towards the hearts of those who do not know this light which is communicating itself in order to transform them.

The truth is that for the Christian the measure of a man's sanctity is the very holiness of God Himself. That is something which an Essene would never have imagined. As it was, he could hardly believe that the sanctity of the angels should be made the measure of that of man, and he was amazed that this being, fashioned from dust and clay, should be able to join the company of those spirits who see the face of God. For the Christian, however, the cause of his amazement is much more profound. For him it is not just a case of becoming a servant even among the very highest servants of God, but of living with the very life of God—'Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' This all-powerful love penetrating and transforming the whole of humanity through those who allow themselves to be inflamed by it is on quite a different plane to Essenism.

The writer of this article confesses that up to a couple of years ago he tended to be quite overcome with enthusiasm for Essenism and saw it as something really wonderful. Now however he sees that its logic, for all its profundity, is a logic that can only lead to despair, with its irreconcilable division in creation and the possibility of saving nothing but the light. It is true that this promotion of man to share in the angelic role of praise is a very high conception, but it is by no means the message that Christ came to give us.

But for all its defects we must not ignore the important positive elements that Essenism stressed. As mentioned above, these can be reduced to three main points. First, there is the need of a personal conversion through some sort of new alliance, so that the predestined can draw near to God—this is the new birth of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus. Secondly, the fraternal community is the temple which God prefers infinitely more than any building of stone—remembering, however, that they limited this fraternal community to the predestined, and that the notion of love of one's enemies was something they never realised. Thirdly, sincere and interior praise of God is preferable to all the bloody sacrifices.

There is no doubt that these elements are already an important positive contribution. Nevertheless it is difficult to know what is the dominating factor there—is Essenism a light which God has prepared for the coming of the fulness of light, destined to proceed along the same lines, or is it a kind of *chiaroscuro*, a doctrine of shadows in

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contrast with the sudden optimism springing from that love of God which is capable of conquering the whole of humanity ?

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QUESTION AND ANSWER

MARANATHA

In 1 Cor. 16:22 we find the word Maranatha, one of the few Aramaic expressions to be preserved in the New Testament. What does this word mean, and what is its doctrinal significance ?

The words—for there are two of them—come immediately after a plea for the condemnation, *anathema*, of those who do not love the Lord Jesus. In antiquity the phrase was divided into *maran atha*, 'The Lord has come' or 'The Lord comes.' There is found in old Jewish formulas of condemnation a similar expression, 'The Name (i.e. God) has come.' Thus, if St Paul was thinking along similar lines when he was finishing his epistle, such a condemnation would be a manifestation of our Lord's capacity of sovereign judge who punishes the wicked (cf. Mt. 25:31-46).

In more recent times many scholars divide the expression into *marana tha*, 'Our Lord, come !' If this is the meaning of the phrase as used by the Apostle, then he shows his desire for the definitive stage of the reign of Jesus to arrive. Such a desire is certainly implicit in the petition of the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy kingdom come.' In this understanding of the phrase there is reference to Jesus as judge, for he will upon his return immediately pass judgment upon mankind (cf. Mt. 25:31-46) ; moreover it is precisely as judge that our Lord is asked to come in Apoc. 22:17-21 where the command 'Come, Lord Jesus' is equivalent in meaning to *marana tha*.

The importance of the second coming of Jesus in Christian belief is reflected in the article of the Apostles' Creed 'I believe . . . in the resurrection of the body.' The general resurrection will take place at the time of the parousia (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-18). The importance of our Lord's second coming and what follows from it was better realised by the members of the early Church than it is by most today. This return of the Saviour was the hope and expectation of the first generation of believers, though they knew 'Neither the day nor the hour' (Mt. 25:13 ; cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-3). At the second coming of our Lord his victory over sin and death will be complete, for Satan will

no longer be able to tempt men, and death, the result of sin (Rom. 5:12; cf. Gen. 3:19), will be no more (1 Cor. 15:54-8); those who were 'faithful unto death' will indeed have the 'crown of life' (Apoc. 2:10), glorious life not only of soul but of body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:36-49; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11) when our humble bodies will be made conformable to the glorious body of Christ (Phil. 3:20), and will rule triumphant with him who has already risen triumphant over the devil and death (cf. Acts 2:22-36). At the parousia the restoration of all things in Christ Jesus will be fully accomplished (cf. Eph. 1:10); finally all creation will be in perfect harmony with its Creator and hence with itself.

This theological teaching is correct. Whether or not it is implicit in the saying of St Paul found in 1 Cor. 16:22 depends upon which of two possible interpretations of the text is correct. Today there are both Catholic and non-Catholic exegetes who champion one or the other explanation of the phrase. St Paul did not tell us what he meant by it, as he did when he used the Aramaic *Abba*, 'Father' (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15), and so it is impossible to be certain. Here as occasionally elsewhere we are reduced to regretting that the sacred author was not more explicit.

Maranatha is found in the tenth chapter of the *Didache*; here we are faced with the same difficulty regarding the division of the phrase. This chapter is generally considered as containing prayers belonging to the Eucharistic liturgy. The two pertinent verses read: 'Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If one is holy, let him come; if one is not, let him do penance. *Maranatha*. Amen.' It seems clear that there is here a remembrance of or a reference to 1 Cor. 16:21f. There is no logical development found in this section of the *Didache*; hence from the eschatological desire of the one verse one cannot argue with certainty to the eschatological interpretation of the second.

Maranatha was employed in some of the early liturgies also. However, it is not possible to interpret St Paul's text from them. The expression—no matter how it was divided and thus understood—could have been and possibly was used in many senses: a cry that our Lord be in the midst of the praying community or a recognition that he was in its midst (cf. Mt. 18:20), a cry of hope for the final consummation of the world (Apoc. 22:17-20), perhaps a prayer that the Eucharistic transubstantiation be effected, a cry before communion. The liturgies are often lacking in logical development: they are concerned with the worship of God from various aspects and with various petitions for the Church and its members, centred of course on the Eucharistic sacrifice and Communion;

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the strict application of logic could stifle the various aspects of prayer.

In the context of I Cor. 16:22 the title *maran(a)* is referred to Jesus. He was considered as Lord, a divine being. He was so considered not only in the Greek church, but also in the Palestinian church, the mother church. St Paul would only have used an Aramaic expression when addressing a non-Palestinian group if such an expression were common in the Palestinian church and known to the other communities as such. Moreover, this belief in the divinity of Jesus was current in the Church from the beginning, ante-dating the earliest Christian writings. While this truth is manifest elsewhere we have here an unintentional confirmation of the belief. To Jesus are subject all things as the Apostle declares earlier in the same epistle (15:27), but this belief in the divine sovereignty of Jesus is not the creation of St Paul; it was something common and at the same time proper to the Church antecedent to him.

No matter what the temporal reference of *(a)tha*, the context of I Cor., as well as that of Apoc. 22, shows that we are concerned with Jesus, Lord and Judge. The importance of this aspect of our Lord's activity has never been forgotten in the history of the Church, though the accent has been placed in later Christian piety upon the judgment of each individual human being immediately after death. Nevertheless the stress placed in the New Testament upon the definitive judgment of all mankind together, at the second coming of our Lord, should lead us to ponder the meaning and importance of the last judgment when our Lord will exercise to the full his office of judge.

JOHN J. O'ROURKE

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A. Gelin, J. Schmitt, Pierre Benoit, M.-E. Boismard, Donatien Mollat, *Son and Saviour: The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures*. Tr. Anthony Wheaton. Geoffrey Chapman, London 1960. pp. 151. 12s 6d.

This book is the translation of *Lumière et Vie* no. 9, April 1953, which was devoted to the theme of *Jésus, le Fils de Dieu*. Subscribers to the distinguished bi-monthly publication of the Dominicans of

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Lyons will remember the excellence of this particular number, and it was a happy idea to make it available to English readers.

Theologians are becoming increasingly aware of the harm done by an apologetic which under pressure of circumstances was allowed to overstep its proper limits and invade the whole of theology. For instance the divinity of Jesus Christ was *proved* and the arguments of those who denied it, refuted with the clear implication that the reader had thereby been *compelled*, if he possessed intellectual integrity and good will, to assert that Jesus is the Son of God.

One of the weaknesses in this approach was a tendency to regard every statement in the revealed sources as a static and precise formulation of a dogma. There was a failure to appreciate the need for a gradual revelation of so tremendous a mystery as the divinity of Christ; there was a failure to realise the enormous limitations of human actions and human words, when pressed into service for the revealing of this truth; and there was a failure to appreciate the difficulty of eliciting the act of faith demanded of our Lord's disciples, and consequently their inadequate attempts to express their faith.

The remedying of such weaknesses is to the great benefit of theology, for we are given a far greater appreciation of the supernatural character of the Christian mysteries and of the Christian's act of faith. Such an approach may cause some embarrassment to the apologete, but we may confidently hope that this is no more than a passing difficulty, soon to be removed by a reconsideration and a more careful presentation of the classical apologetic arguments.

We read in the introduction to this book that 'there is thus a very long road from the call on the shore of Lake Genesareth to the gospel of John. There is an equally long road from the first preaching after Pentecost to the precise doctrine of Paul and John.' This truth is emphasised throughout the book, for the doctrine of our Lord's divinity is here considered, precisely as it is gradually unfolded throughout the New Testament: in Acts, in the synoptic gospels, in the writings of St Paul and in the writings of St John. All this is prefaced by an introductory chapter on the expectation of God in the Old Testament, where A. Gelin emphasises that the idea of the Messiah, highly complex though it was, never measured up to the reality of God made Man.

Throughout the book due attention is paid to chronological sequence in the composition of the New Testament. This is no easy question and no great measure of certainty can be claimed, but there is a continual awareness of the problem. Thus the doctrine of our Lord's divinity is first considered in the Acts and in those texts now found in the pauline epistles, which are regarded as pre-pauline

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liturgical fragments. Moreover J. Schmitt faces the question of the historical value and the antiquity of the discourses in Acts, and concludes that they in fact preserve the earliest forms of the Christian creed. P. Benoit raises the same question with regard to the synoptic gospels. He emphasises the fact that these were written at a time when faith in the divinity of Christ had already received a clear formulation. Consequently the synoptic gospels are theological treatises rather than historical biographies, and their arrangement and wording owe much to the needs of the Christian community. Nevertheless they are historically reliable, and give us an accurate knowledge of our Lord's own teaching concerning himself. D. Mollat is no less aware of this question in reference to St John's gospel. The declaration of faith in Christ's divinity is here so clear and sustained that this gospel has often been regarded as worthless from the historical point of view, its author according to Loisy knowing only a liturgical Christ, the recipient of Christian worship. That John's gospel gives us the results of a more profound meditation on our Lord's divinity is not denied, but Mollat shows that this is no independent creation, but something well rooted in the earlier traditions, and something as wholly dependent upon the historical facts of Jesus' life, as are the synoptic gospels.

The excellent qualities of this book on which I have remarked so far may possibly be labelled as negative ones, though in truth they are supremely important. But I hasten to add that the positive aspects of the revelation concerning our Lord's divinity are treated equally well. This achievement is eloquent testimony to the truth that a strict evaluation of the sources does not reduce the cogency and clarity of revelation, as is sometimes feared. The divinity of our Lord is expressed in terms of his exaltation by God, of his receiving from God glory and power, and of his being named the Prophet, the Servant and the Lord. The titles so prominent in the synoptic gospels, namely Son of God and Son of Man 'which (latter) paradoxically enough is more valuable to our study' (p. 72) are carefully examined, and the pauline teaching on the pre-existent Son, the image of the invisible God, is clearly set forth against its proper background.

I do not hesitate to say that this short book is of great importance and extremely valuable. It is therefore with considerable reluctance that I must conclude with a reference to the English translation. Ostensibly it is the latter I have been reviewing, but in reality I have been using this opportunity to bring the French book to the attention of readers. I could not possibly have felt any enthusiasm if I had been acquainted only with *Son and Saviour*. The translation is appalling; it is a travesty of the original and much of it makes nonsense.

T. WORDEN

BOOK REVIEWS

Margaret T. Monro, *The Old Testament and Our Times*. Longmans, London 1960. pp. ix-x, 105. 15s.

Miss Monro tells us in her preface that she has written this book for newcomers to the Old Testament, to whet their interest and to show its relevance to our own 'chaotic century' because 'A Catholic can hardly help being an apostle; his only choice is to be a clumsy or a competent one.' She has succeeded admirably.

Each chapter opens with an introduction, giving general background information of a kind often difficult to come by without extensive reading; the notes on population movements in Patriarchal and later times (pp. 69, 70), for example, are very well done. The relevant section of the Bible is then dealt with in the light of this background. Finally some Old Testament readings (with brief comments) are proposed, together with points for discussion. These are designed to show that the questions of our own day, religious, social, political and economic, have arisen before in circumstances not much removed from our own, and that the answers can be found in the Old Testament if they are sought by faithful hearts.

Topics dealt with include the Wisdom movement, the Exile, prophets and prophecy, the materialism and corruption of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, the Iron Age revolution, changing ideas of the universe and their impact on religion and the development of doctrines concerned with the next world. There is a useful section on chronology.

This book will be invaluable to Bible study groups and individuals who buy it will find it very helpful. They will, I believe, be impelled either to join or to form a group in order to discuss the many searching questions proposed by the author.

Although not a work of reference it would have been even better if an index, a table of biblical references and a sketch-map of western Asia had been included.

CLARKE TURNER

Leonard Johnston, *Witnesses to God*. Sheed & Ward, London and New York 1960. pp. 174. 13s 6d.

This book is an excellent introduction to the Bible. It has none of the scholastic paraphernalia of divisions and sub-divisions, technical terms and discussions on dating, literary dependence and authorship. But with a wealth of learning on which to draw, and a talent for clear,

forceful and attractive writing Fr Johnston persuasively inculcates that true attitude towards the Bible, without which the learned facts of scholastic introductions, however valuable and necessary, are so much useless lumber. For the Bible is not an ancient book about an ancient people : it is the word of God, full of grace and truth. It is precisely because Fr Johnston insists upon this, and is guided by this belief in all he writes, that this book provides an excellent introduction to the Bible.

One might not realise this from the title of the book, which on the dust-cover is supported by a list of names : Abraham, Moses, David, Elias, Isaias, Esdras, John the Baptist, John the Divine, The Man Christ Jesus. This may suggest that here we have a series of biographical sketches of people for whom on the whole biographical details are very scanty. And anyone already acquainted with hagiographical writing on biblical characters might be forgiven for feeling some misgivings. But any such misgivings will not survive the first chapter, which is one of the best in the book. With a fine economy of words the author gives us a true picture of what biblical history is, and this is so important because a very large part of the Bible is cast in this mould. 'The Bible is interested in what has happened in the world in so far as it is "salvation history" : and it has selected and arranged and described events in order to bring out this point of view. . . . (It is) the account of what God has done, historical events indeed, but selected, arranged and described so as to bring out the point of view that God has acted to save men.'

This is, as the author states, the first and most basic principle, and he insists upon it throughout the book, which is a rapid journey through the history of God's chosen people, making use of some outstanding individuals to mark its progress. As he examines each of these, he shows how God made use of them to further the revealing of Himself and the salvation of mankind, for 'the Bible is not hagiography, or panegyric of the Great Men of Old. It is the history of salvation, and each character who appears in this history is important first and foremost for the part he plays in the history as a whole.' In other words, the author shows the truth of a statement he made in the opening chapter : 'It (the Old Testament) is not a pretty picture of a hope and an ideal, a dream and a delusion. It is the factual, concrete record of what God has done to save men.' This may help to correct that tragically wrong attitude towards the Old Testament, which views it as nothing but a number of prophecies which 'prove' that Jesus is the Messias, scattered here and there in a history of the Jews.

The appearance of this book makes still less defensible the attitude of those whose sole reference to the Bible is a cheap jibe about the

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mangling it is supposed to be receiving at the hands of biblical scholars. This short book, simply and eloquently written, will show that the realisation for instance of what kind of stories the first chapters of Genesis contain, is no obstacle to a deep appreciation of the Bible as the word of God: rather it is the necessary condition. The author feels no need to 'defend' the Bible, for having opened it and read it he knows that the Bible is its own defence. This excellent book should persuade many self-styled defenders to open the Bible, and help them to read it, so that they too may come to realise that here we have the two-edged sword which is the word of God.

T. WORDEN

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(The mention of books in this list neither implies nor precludes subsequent review)

G. Johannes Botterweck & Josef Maria Nielen (edit.), *Bibel und Leben*. Patmos-Verlag, Dusseldorf 1960. 4 Hefte, DM 15, Einzelheft DM 4.

This is a new Catholic Biblical quarterly, having as its aim to make available to the more general public the findings of biblical scholarship, with a particular stress upon the Bible's contribution to the life of faith.

Mary Devitt, *The Gospel in Pictures*. Burns & Oates and MacMillan & Co., Ltd, London 1960. pp. 64, 6s.

R. de Vaux, O.P., *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, vol. 2. Editions du Cerf, Paris 1960. pp. 544, NF 19.50.

The first volume, dealing with the tribal, domestic and civil organisation of Israel, appeared two years ago (cf. *Scripture*, 1958, p. 127). After considering the military organisation, this second volume deals with the more important questions concerned with the organisation of the cult, viz. the sanctuaries and especially the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, other liturgical rites and the calendar. An English translation of this valuable work is eagerly awaited.

The Pamphlet Bible Series, general editor Neil J. McEleney, C.S.P., Paulist Press, New York. *The Book of Numbers, Part I*, Frederick L. Moriarty, S.J. pp. 96, 75c. *The Book of Deuteronomy, Part I*, George S. Glanzman, S.J. pp. 79, 75c.

G. B. Stern, *Bernadette*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, Edinburgh 1960. pp. 75, 12s 6d.

B. C. Butler, *The Church and the Bible*. Helicon Press, Baltimore and Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1960. pp. 111, 8s 6d.

Rudolf Peil, *A Handbook of the Liturgy*. Tr. H. E. Winstone, Herder, Freiburg and Nelson, Edinburgh 1960. pp. 317, 30s.

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Recherches Bibliques : Littérature et Théologie Pauliniennes. Desclée de Brouwer, 1960. pp. 240, 160 fr. belg.

This is the collection of papers read at the eleventh session of the *Journées Bibliques de Louvain* in 1959, and both historical and theological problems connected with the Pauline epistles are considered in the light of the most recent research.

Jacques Dupont, O.S.B., *Les Sources du Livre des Actes.* Desclée de Brouwer, 1960. pp. 168.

Henri Cazelles (editor), *Dictionnaire de la Bible Supplément*, fasc. xxxiv. Letouzey et Ané, Paris 1960. NF 20.

This fascicule contains two very important articles : on the Pasch, by H. Haag, and on Parable, by A. George. A. M. Brunet writes on the Books of Paralipomenon, and B. Botte on biblical Papyri. There are geographical and archaeological articles on Palestine and Palmyra, and a useful article on Paradise by E. Cothenet.

Roland E. Murphy, O.CARM., *Seven Books of Wisdom.* Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1960. pp. 163.

Maurice and Louis Becque, C.S.S.R., *Life After Death.* Faith & Fact Book, no. 28. Burns & Oates, London 1960. pp. 126, 8s 6d.

Bernard Guillemain, *The Early Middle Ages.* Faith & Fact Book, no. 75. Burns & Oates, London 1960. pp. 126, 8s 6d.

L. Cerfaux, *The Four Gospels.* Tr. Patrick Hepburne-Scott, Intr. Leonard Johnston. The Newman Press, Westminster and Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, London 1960. pp. 145, 9s 6d.

Ronald A. Knox, *Occasional Sermons.* Ed. and Intr. Philip Caraman, S.J. Burns & Oates, London 1960. pp. 426, 42s.

Francis J. Ripley, *A Priest for Ever.* Burns & Oates, London 1960. pp. 233, 25s.

Alexander Jones, *Mary, the Mother of the Word.* Australian Catholic Biblical Congress, 1959. Recorded by E.M.I. (Australia) Ltd, Sydney 1960, on L.P. PRX-4676. £A1 6s (postage extra).

The Australian Catholic Biblical Congress, at which the guest-speaker was Fr Alexander Jones, S.T.L., L.S.S., the well-known English scripture scholar, was held from 23 to 27 August 1959, and was a great success (cf. *Scripture*, 1960, pp. 20ff.). The Catholic Biblical Association of Australia then decided to make available on long-playing records the lectures Fr Jones gave there. Unfortunately they have since met with insuperable difficulties, so that the only disc now available is this one on the subject of Mary, the Mother of the Word. Copies may be obtained from the Rev. C. Baker, St Columban's College, Turrumurra, N.S.W., Australia.

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